

UROSPATHELLA, NEW GENUS OF VENEZUELAN ARACEAE

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Recent explorations of the Territorio Federal Amazonas of Venezuela have revealed the limited distribution of a singular, diminutive aroid of wet savannas. It has slender, entire, oblong or elliptic leaf blades on elongate petioles, and long attenuate spathes. Because of its unilocular ovary with two, basally fixed ovules, it was originally described in the Asian genus Cyrtosperma (as C. wurdackii Bunting). However, the seeds of Cyrtosperma have endosperm, while those of closely allied American genera lack it. The inclusion of this species in Urospatha has been considered, but that American genus is characterized by an incompletely bilocular ovary with two or more ovules per locule fixed centrally on the partition, and by leaf blades of a very distinctive, sagittate form. [The unilocular and uniovulate condition of the pistils of U. savannarum Steyerl. (Fieldiana, Bot. 28: 102. 1951) has not been verified.] Since this Amazonian species does not conform to either of these genera, a new genus is proposed to accommodate it.

Urospathella Bunting, gen. nov. TYPE: Urospathella wurdackii (Bunting) Bunting.

Urospathae Schott affinis, a quo pistillorum ovario uniloculari, loculo biovulato, ovulis prope basim loculi affixis, spatha longissime attenuata nunquam torta, seminis verrucosis ut videtur sine endospermio, et foliorum lamina anguste lineari vel elliptica sine lobis posticis differt.

The form of the ovule also seems to be distinctive, having the funiculus inserted at the center of the ovule, nearly perpendicular to its axis.

Urospathella wurdackii (Bunting) Bunting, comb. nov. Cyrtosperma wurdackii Bunting, Acta Bot. Venez. 10: 285. 1975. TYPE: Maguire & Wurdack 36384 (holotype, NY). Venezuela. Amazonas: Río Guainía, "sabanita" along Caño Pimichín on right bank, 1 km above Pimichín, 140 m, 24 Nov. 1953. PARATYPE: Maguire & Cowan 30566 (NY). Venezuela. Amazonas: Cerro Yapacana, río Orinoco, Savanna no. 3, NW base of mountain, 130 m, 1 Jan. 1951.

The spathe of this species is long attenuate but not bifid as stated in the original description. The spathe in vivo is probably not flat and splits as a result of pressure during the drying process, thereby creating the bifid spathe seen in some herbarium specimens.

Distribution: west-central Territorio Federal Amazonas of Venezuela and adjacent Colombia (Vaupés).

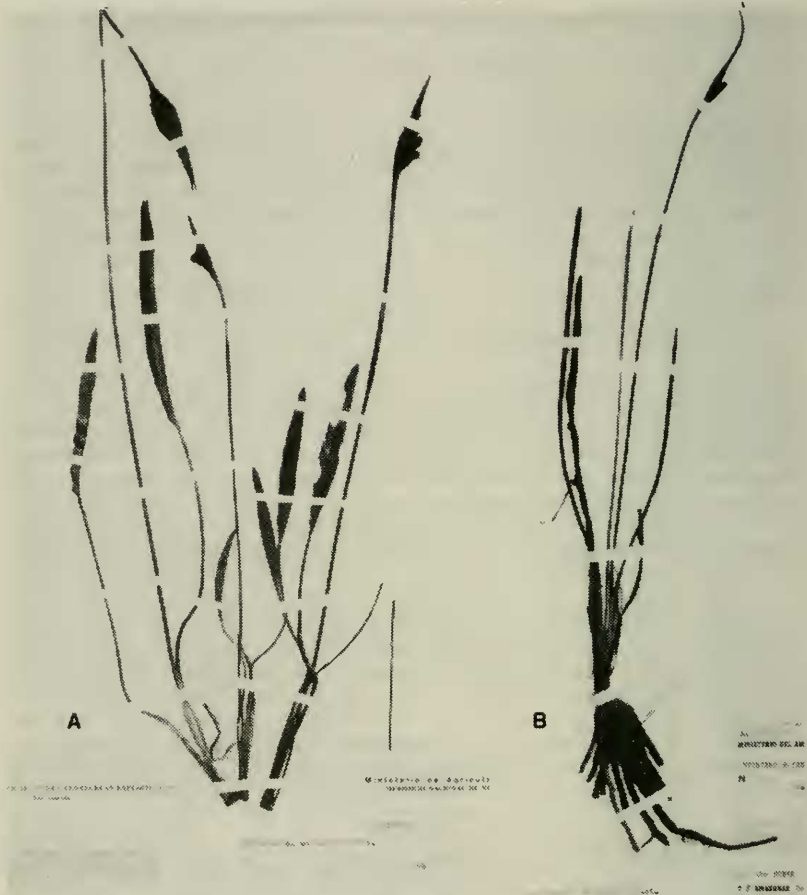


Figure 1. *Urospathella wurdackii* (Bunting) Bunting. A, Maguire & Wurdack 36384 (isotype, VEN); B, O. Huber 2637 (VEN).

Two other American species were described in *Cyrtosperma*, viz., *C. americanum* Engl. in Mart., and *C. spruceanum* (Schott) Engl. in Mart. Both have pinnatipartite leaf blades more or less sagittate in outline, although their ovary condition is similar to that of *Urospathella wurdackii*. Mr. Alistair Hay has reported (personal communication) the absence of endosperm in the seeds of these species, obliging their removal from *Cyrtosperma*. No publication relative to their transfer has been seen.